
FEATURE ARTICLES

Kazakhstan

By

Zhalgas A. Ospanov
Security Assistance Office, Almaty, Kazakhstan



Kazakhstan is situated in Central Asia, deep in the Eurasian continent. Its territory covers 2,700,900 square kilometers (i.e. 1,049,150 square miles). In terms of the area it is the second largest among the Commonwealth of Independent States. In fact the territory of Kazakhstan exceeds that occupied by twelve countries of the European Union. Kazakhstan borders upon the following states:

China	1.460 km long border;
Kyrgyzstan	980 km;
Turkmenistan	380 km;
Uzbekistan	2.300 km;
The Russian Federation	6.467 km.

Total length of borders amounts to 12.187 km.

Historical Setting

Until the arrival of Russians in the eighteenth century, the history of Kazakhstan was determined by the movements, conflicts, and alliances of Turkic and Mongol tribes. The nomadic tribal society of what came to be the Kazak people experienced increasingly frequent incursions by the Russian Empire, ultimately being included in that empire and the Soviet Union that followed it.

The 1980s brought glimmers of political independence, as well as conflict, as the central government's hold progressively weakened. An altogether new political atmosphere was swelling up in the country. Young people came out to the square to express a universal protest against the methods resorted to by the administer-and-command system which as of old demonstrated little regard for the opinion of the population of the Republic. On August 19, 1991 there was an abortive coup attempt; by September of the same year, the Communist Party of Kazakhstan was disbanded. On December 16, 1991 a law of constitutional effectiveness was passed and became the law of the *Republic of Kazakhstan Independence*.

Tremendous natural resources of Kazakhstan, social and political stability in the Republic make this region one of the most attractive objects of capital investments among other republics of the late Soviet Union. The Republic of Kazakhstan has become a full-fledged equal member of the world community. In 1997 the circumstance conditioned by geopolitical and economic considerations of Kazakhstan's development; the decision was made to transfer the capital of the country from Almaty to Akmola. The population Astana is as large as 319,000 people. The official language of the Republic of Kazakhstan is Kazakh.

People of Kazakhstan

The etymology of the name Kazakh is likely derived from a Turkic word meaning "wanderer" or "independent man." The people inhabit an area between the Caspian Sea to the west to Lake Balkash in the east, north of the Syr Darya River and south of the Siberian lowlands.



The Kazakhs were absorbed into the Russian Empire during the 18th century and the Khanates (autonomous rulers) were dissolved during the 19th century. During the Soviet era, Stalin ended the Kazakhs nomadic ways and collectivized the farms or work in the factories. In a show of resistance, many Kazakhs slaughtered their herds, resulting in a famine that left over one million Kazakhs dead. The majority of Kazakhs are Turkic/Mongolian in appearance, with straight black hair, olive complexion, small nose, and typically broad face. Due to intermarriage between the various nationalities there is a wide range of physical appearance.



The war memorial in Panfilov Park commemorates the soldiers from Almaty who died in the defense of Moscow during World War II.



The Zenkov Cathedral in Almaty is built entirely of wood without nails. The Cathedral is filled with icons and murals.

In 2000 Kazakhstan had an estimated population of 148,419. Representatives of nearly 120 nationalities inhabit the Republic at the moment, more particularly:

Kazakhs	53.4%
Russians	30.0%
Ukrainians	3.7%
Germans	2.4%
Tatars	1.7%

Some 1.4 million Kazaks lived outside Kazakstan, nearly all in the Russian and Uzbek republics. At that time, an estimated one million Kazaks lived in China, and a sizeable but uncounted Kazak population resided in Mongolia.

Kazakhstan and its Economic Potential

Kazakhstan's share in world output of commercial minerals and products of procession thereof (according to estimates of the Union Bank of Switzerland) in the days of the late Soviet Union amounted to the following:

Beryllium	24%	Lead	7%
Zink	7%	Bauxites	1%
Tantalum	33%	Uranium	14%
Titanium	26%	Manganese	5%
Chromite	27%	Silver	6%
Copper	3%	Iron ore	2%
Barite	7%	Tungsten	12%
Molybdenum	3%	Gold	1%

Today Kazakhstan is rich with commercial minerals. In terms of chromium, vanadium, bismuth and fluorine reserves Kazakhstan is the world leader. Kazakhstan is one of the top producers of the following:

Iron	Chromite	lead	zink	tungsten
Molybdenum	Phosphorite	copper	potassium	cadmium

Kazakhstan is an important energy and power generation region. Development of more advanced and significant power generation capabilities within the next 5-10 years ensures Kazakhstan's independence in terms of energy and an advanced development.

Within Kazakhstan nearly 160 deposits of oil and gas were recently discovered. Their reserves known day are approximately equal to present day resources of the whole of the Western Europe. These oil and gas fields contain about 20,000,000,000 barrels of oil and 700,000,000 tons of gas condensate. The Tenghiz field ranks as one of the largest deposits of the world.

Coal reserves in Kazakhstan reach 160,000,000,000 ton. The Republic numbers 10 coal fields of bituminous and brown coal, over 155 deposits in all.

Tourism

The Republic of Kazakhstan attaches great importance to the development of certain spheres of present-day infrastructure including tourism. Kazakhstan is a land of ancient civilization. From remote times its inhabitants, the ancestors of the present-day Kazakhs, were creating a unique and original culture. Some outstanding monuments of their cultural heritage have survived in the form of burial mounds, settlements, fortifications, mausoleums and even whole towns. Hodja Ahmed Yasavi Mausoleum in Turkestan (up to the 16th century Yasi city) in Southern Kazakhstan is unique among them.

Kazakhstan tourism firms cooperate with almost eighty countries of the world. Some 25 tourism firms in Almaty and 5 companies in regional centers arrange charter flights to India, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, South Korea, Greece and Poland. As a matter of fact Kazakhstan provides for all known aspects of tourism cognitive, entertaining, ethnic, ecological, rehabilitative, children-oriented, sportive, hunting, equestrian and adventure. The region affords unique climatic opportunities for recreation, rehabilitation, hunting, alpinism, mountain-skiing and skating. Tremendous scientific and cultural interest are present by the monuments of ancient Mangyshlak and Ustyurt, and other memorable sites evoking Kazakh epos.

Kazakhstani Switzerland is the second name given to Burabai, Kokshetau region which is in the Northern Kazakhstan. Amidst the yellow scorched unending steppe one encounters a green wall of forest. It harbors wonders: hillocks overgrown with trees, stonyridges, fantastical heaps of rocks like fairy giants and ghosts as silent as bewitched lakes. This mysterious land is Burabai. Potential tourists are offered over 700 travel routes about the territory of Kazakhstan. Tourism yields profits grow annually. The share of national income generated from tourism (as compared to 1991) has grown from 0.06 percent to 0.23 percent. Kazakhstan offers 372 hotels of various classes with a simultaneous accommodation of 36,876 people.





A blind dombra player plays traditional melodies in the marketplace.



The Museum of Kazak Musical Instruments. A giant dombra represents the traditional instruments inside.

About the Author

Zhalgas A. Ospanov is the International Military Education and Training Manager and Budget Analyst in the U.S. Security Assistance Office, Almaty, Kazakhstan. He has held this position since the office opened in 1999. He received his Bachelor of Languages degree in 1996 from the University of World Languages in Almaty, majoring in the Korean and English languages. He is a graduate of the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management, taking the Foreign Purchaser (SAM-F) and Overseas (SAM-O) courses. He is fluent in Korean, English, Russian, and Kazakh, and reads Turkish.